

God is Not for Sale

Darshan Diary

Tuesday 26 Oct. 1977

Interview with Mahesh.

Mahesh was at Darshan tonight. He is an Indian film director and sannyasin who visits Poona whenever he has a break from filming in Bombay. In an interview, Mahesh described amusingly and with all the eloquence and flamboyant gestures of a show business personality, his first encounter with Osho, seven years before his actually taking sannyas.

Mahesh: Had just finished college and I was an assistant director. I used to do a particular study of films, and for that one has to go book-hunting all over town. I walked into a book stall called Strand Bookstall one afternoon—This boy just out of college with a passion for films—and as I walked in there, I see a man with white robes standing there, picking up

books.

Maneesha: He was there?!

Mahesh: He was then in the bookstall

Maneesha: Wow!

Mahesh: I just looked at him. I didn't know anything about what he was but his personality hit me on the head.

Mahesh went on to say that he learned more of Osho through Vijay, another film producer sannyasin, and begun to read Osho's books when he wasn't consuming books and filmmaking.

Maneesha: How long did it take between just having a casual interest in him and actually meeting him?

Mahesh: It was four or five months. I came to listen to a lecture, and the first time I saw him, I knew I was in trouble [laughter], I kept away after that but my trips become more frequent. I used to be very frightened to be here because the whole film game is different; you know, the whole thing of power. What he was talking of was totally negating what we were practicing in the film trade.

After four months I got miserable, absolutely, because I was feeling this pull towards him, and Krishnamurti was the block because I'd read Krishnamurti and heard him. He was the last block I had. I was actually frightened

to meet Osho personally--that's why, perhaps, I was postponing Darshan.

I used to meditate a lot and have experiences in meditation and I used to feel totally helpless and Vijay told me," Look, now you must ask for his help." He said, "The problem is that you have a block with Krishnamurti. Why don't you go and meet Osho?"

I said," Yes, okay. I'll meet him," and the whole day I was trying to be normal. I went to the film Institute, saw some Chaplin films, Bergman films and what not. You know--I was trying to be very serious about films, films, films! So it was a defence I was building up before I went to see him. So I came to Darshan in the evening--

When I was there in his presence I looked at him and said, "oh, now I have seen him. Now I'll go back home and get down to serious film-making. I'm going to be the greatest film-maker on the face of the earth"--till Osho turned around and said, "Come here! I walked up to him and I fell at his feet.

The first feeling was that I'd never touched anyone or anything the way I touched his feet. And then when I looked up, I was fearful, totally. I was shaking--I couldn't control myself. And I don't know how, but I actually saw an aura of light around him.

I remember he said to Vijay at the back, "Come here, come close and give him some moral support." He said, "What's happening in you?" I said, "I'm frightened." He said, "Don't worry--I'm here with you." He asked me, "Will you take sannyas?" And my whole

body shook! You know it, it was not only me saying. It was like from every pore my body was saying, "Yes!" Then he put the mala on and I was gone! [Laughter] I was caught.

So it took me four or five months before I saw him. In meditation I had been getting this peculiar emotional state. I would sit down and analyse the whole situation and would say, "No, it's just my projection and nothing is happening." So I was absolutely confused in those four months.

I took more to liquor. I used to get more frustrated. I was an alcoholic--almost an alcoholic in those four months. I used to drink about two, three bottles of liquor every day. And after sannyas, liquor has just dropped.

Maneesh: Can you talk about changes--general and specific--since you've been a sannyasin?--how perhaps, sannyas has affected your work?

Mahesh: As I said in the last darshan, I feel lost. I just cannot connect with my past at all--it looks so distant. It kind of frightens me also. Sometimes I find it is difficult in my work because I can't stick to it. I find I've shot a sequence and when I come back to my film shooting, I find that everything looks far off. I have a little problem in adjusting.

My whole perception of the physical reality has undergone such a change but I find it difficult to relate in my work--to explain things to my camera man who's not a sannyasin. I see something else--I see a path of light or I see the moon, and I tell him. He

just can't see it. So I find it a little difficult to relate because the people I work with belong to a different world.

Obvious changes are that I'm not so restless as I used to be, not totally possessed with filmmaking. The passion has somehow gone—that I'm the greatest filmmaker ..this sort of trip. The film has become a toy now, otherwise the film was bigger than me. I mean "The director, Mahesh" was bigger. Now it's like a toy which I choose to play with when I want or keep away from what I want. I like to play that game because I like films and because it's the only thing I know to earn my bread-and-butter.

I have much more sleep now. And I find the people around me .. First I felt that they were very aggressive. It was, of course, my aggression. I found I was very uncomfortable with people whether they were sannyasins or outside my work ..

Maneesha: What was the first reaction of the people you work with to your becoming a sannyasin?

Mahesh: They laughed. Three months after sannyas my second film was a box office crash, so the film industry had the opportunity to hit back. And they were hitting back—at my robes, at Osho ..everything. But I knew it was a natural reaction: they had to because I pushed them so much once upon a time. Now they had the chance and they were emptying out their trips. Now things have cooled down.

Actually whenever I'm shooting, the stars make it a point to ask me what's happening. They look at me at times and they do feel a change. Initially it was just

“Hah—one of those trips you’ve got into.” Now I feel that they perhaps notice that there’s something more to it than that. They enquire ..they want to come here. They ask about Osho.

My family also .. At first they were very frightened but not now.

Maneesha: Was there a fear that you were going to renounce everything and go away?

Mahesh: No, they saw only that this man is not going to be so active as he was in films. In fact it’s true. I no longer spend my time reading more about films and I don’t .. Suddenly there was a shift to listening to Osho’s tapes or meditating at home, or walking on the beach. Before, most of the time I would spend at the film societies, talking with film people; young film-makers would come and we would spend hours passionately discussing films, films, films.,

So obviously that change is their. It’s not that I’m not capable of doing the other things. I feel that now my attitude is more real. It was a fashionable thing in those days, the study of art.

Then this whole ambition that was their. I mean, I don’t run after stars or producers anymore to get projects through and to organize a publicity campaign. It no longer seems important—the whole film game from press to stars to producers and financiers.

But the film world was definitely shocked at me. The financiers were very frightened about security because for them it means investing 50 to 60 lacks per project

and handing it over to a man who's got robes, and he doesn't speak their language, they're frightened. At the moment I'm making three Indian films. That means I'm handling about two crores of rupees of these financiers. They're frightened to handover this much money to this film-maker. You don't know what he might turn out. He might turn out a film of Osho! They're interested in making films they want the way they want.

Maneesha: Can you talk about your feelings about Osho .. What he is to you, what he means to you?

Mahesh: I feel very close to him. I feel that he's mine. I feel he is a great friend .. A very great friend. That's all I can say.

Maneesha: He seems to affect your energy very easily.

Mahesh: Very easily. Yesterday was the first Darshan that I could look straight into his eyes and be together with him and listen to him. Otherwise the thing is so intense, I don't know what's happening to me. Other times when I'm in front of him, I can't remember what he tells me. At times I want to tell him, "Shut up! I don't want to listen to you!" because the words make no sense to me. But yet something .. He just moves inside me and touches me.

It's very important for me to be very close to him, to see that he is real and to touch him --When he's there just to feel him.

Maneesha: Do you find him very beautiful?

Mahesh: He's really beautiful. He's the most beautiful thing that I've ever laid my eyes on.

I find the silences between the words is when he really tells you something. It's like a ball that he keeps swinging at me and I swing back. When I make a contact like that with him, I don't remain the same. I go back transfigured

Seven days back I broke my mala in Bombay when I was shooting, and I just couldn't shoot. I cancelled my shooting! And cancelling a shooting is a very expensive thing and I didn't tell anybody the reason was that I had broken my mala. I was feeling insecure—as if my mother had let go of my hand.

It was like the same state when I was at kindergarten and my mother said, "I'm going to wait outside for you," and I went back and she was not there. I felt cheated. This feeling of total fear. The Mala broke and I called Poona frantically and said, "Ma Laxmi, send me a mala!"

Maneesha: Do you think you can really grasp the significance of who Osho is?

Mahesh: You know, Maneesha, I don't know. I told him once. I was in my studio one evening just sitting down and suddenly something opened up in front of me—I don't know what. I don't know how long it lasted, but everything that he talks about made sense to me. I knew what he was talking about, and all that he says through his tapes. That has given more trust to me. It's a totally different space, a different feeling absolutely. I've had that feeling of what he is.

Maneesha: I was thinking in the context of him being a master of masters, and a person who comes only in thousands and thousands of years.

Mahesh: I don't know .. I just feel that I've known him ever since I've known myself. I feel that he's been with me for a very long time .. As long as I've been with myself.

When I'm back in Bombay and I want to speak to him and have him answer me, I sit down and open a book of his—this might seem mad to people—and I get my answer, he answers! He manages to send people to me .. sannyassins come and speak to me

Maneesha: What are your feelings about the ashram?

Mahesh: I get this feeling that all the faces are very close to me. I feel very safe. And of course there's something about the ashram. You can actually feel that the light that comes from the early morning discourse is different. It's a different magic force. The plants are different, the trees are different. The fragrance is different.

Maneesha: Have you felt a change, since you've been coming, in the atmosphere?

Mahesh: No, I find that the change is getting less. First when I used to come, the change used to be too much. Bombay, my work, and the ashram .. Just a different thing altogether. But now I just find myself here one day. I finished my shooting at about 9:30 the day before yesterday in the night, and I suddenly

said, "I'm going to Poona," I left the house and got a cab and just got here about four in the morning. Suddenly I find I'm here in the ashram, sitting down here now talking to you. I'm just being taken along. Things just flow into each other.

Maneesha: Orange is beginning to infiltrate the theatre now in Bombay?

Mahesh: Yes, It's very beautiful. We [the sannyassins] keep crossing each other. I even find that the studio is changing, Maneesha. When Vinod is shooting for instance, you find from his room Osho's voice comes from a tape recorder in the film studio [laughter]. You know, producers come to talk to a star and they're listening to a tape! It's beautiful for us in our work.

Even the talk changes from girls and parties. People come and say, "What is this all about, man? Why does he call himself "God"?" Even the small workers—the carpenter will come up and say, "I would like to come with you to Poona next time."

I find at times that my shooting can become very troublesome. For example I was shooting on an outdoor location. Some smuggling is going on and I'm shooting them. A lovely brook is going past and I actually feel a pull towards this brook. The star is sitting down there and I roll up my pants and I take up my chair and sit in the center of the brook. I put my legs in the water. I don't even have a time gap. I mean my mind doesn't go through, "You cant go and sit down there." there is no time involved. I just go and sit there!

The servant boy comes to give you some water and tea, and suddenly you turn towards him and your eyes flow with tears and you want to touch his feet because he's given you a glass of water. Now that gets very embarrassing to people around you like the assistants and the producers and your secretary. They don't know what's happening to this guy-blown his head?! [Laughter] I mean, that's not the way you go on in film shooting

Maneesha: I thought it was accepted that all film people were crazy and eccentric.

Mahesh: Not really. They're supposed to be, but they pose madness.

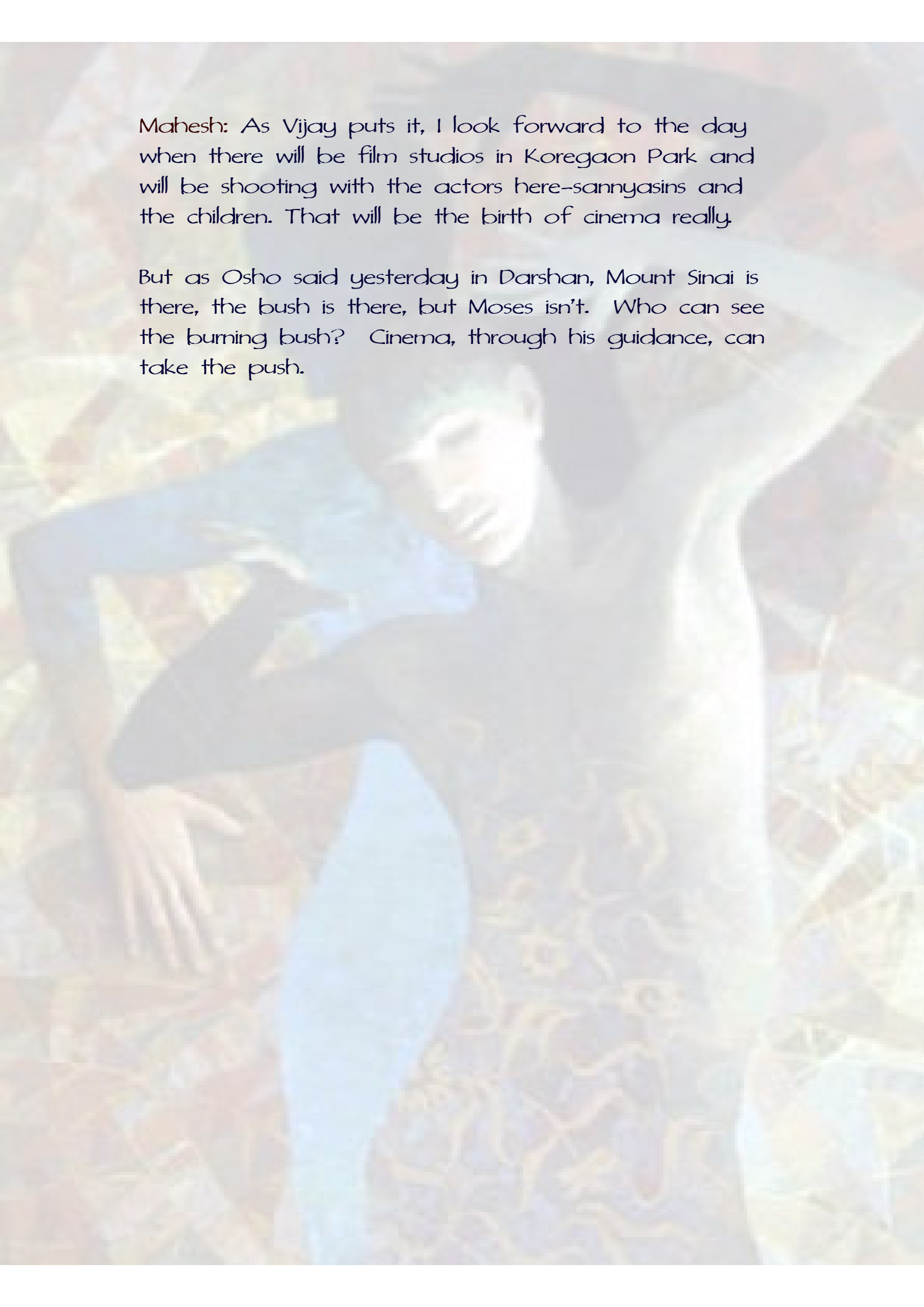
Maneesha: but yours was the real thing?!

Mahesh: I find it very embarrassing to people around us. When we are about to begin filming, it might start raining. To me it no longer matters-I say, "Okay, so It's raining-no shooting." The producers have to come and calculate losses and I say to them, "Its okay, man, Relax!"

He says, "How can I relax?" You see the whole attitude of people around you.

Osho says to us that we must act as if we are troubled; we must act as if we are really disturbed, but I keep on forgetting that at the time.

Mahesh went on to talk about plans to make a film on Osho—a short very subjective series of impressions of groups and Osho at Darshan.



Mahesh: As Vijay puts it, I look forward to the day when there will be film studios in Koregaon Park and will be shooting with the actors here—sannyasins and the children. That will be the birth of cinema really.

But as Osho said yesterday in Darshan, Mount Sinai is there, the bush is there, but Moses isn't. Who can see the burning bush? Cinema, through his guidance, can take the push.